Development Commissioner for Iron and Steel (DCI&S) has launched a National Campaign for increasing the demand for steel, especially in non-traditional sectors, such as rural and agre based industrial sector.

(b) To reduce input costs for steel making, special import duty on several inputs such as coking coal (ash content < 12%) non coking coal (ash content < 12%) metallurgical coke, ferro nickel, charge nickel and nickel oxide sinters, low silica limestones and graphite electrodes (> 28,,) has been waived.

(c) Government has imposed Anti-dumping duties on Hot Rolled Coils, Hot Rolled Strips/Sheets/ Plates and Boiler Quality Plates imported from Russia & Ukraine on 27.11.98.

(d) Govt. has announced floor prices for import of certain finished steel items including seconds and defectives in December, 1998 to restrict their imports at very low prices.

(e) A 'Steel Exporters' forum has been set up to boost exports of iron and steel and to remove bottlenecks in exports.

(f) Rationalisation of Duty Entitlement Pass Book (DEPB) rates for steel exports have been carried out to boost exports.

(g) Enhanced project financing to steel sector by All India Financial Institutions and relaxation of ECB norms has been strongly recommended.

(h) Government has set up an Empowered Committee to examine and assist specific Research and Development Projects to improve technology for steel making and enhance quality of Indian steel.

Restructuring of SAIL

744. SHRI GAYA SINGH: Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there is a proposal under Government's consideration for economic restructuring of Steel Authority of India;

(b) whether Government will take a decision regarding economic restructuring by 31st March, 1999; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI RAMESH BAIS): (a) to (c) The Industrial Development Bank of India (IDBI) have, in their report, *inter-alia,* concluded that Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) should consider business solutions as a long-term strategy for improving operations and enhancing returns by steps such as rationalisation/ divestment of idle or non-core assets, divestment of unrelated/non-core operations and of loss making units etc.

Based on IDBI's recommendations on financial restructuring, SAIL has approached the Government for its financial restructuring which primarily envisages relief from the Steel Development Fund (SDF) loan/ Government of India loan towards writing down of fixed assets to the extent of interest capitalized, writing-off of loans and advances given by SAIL to IISCO, etc. The proposal is under consideration of the Govt.

सतना खानों को बन्द किया जाना

745. श्री गया सिंह: क्या इस्पात तथा खान मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि:

(क) स्टील अथॉरिटी आफ इण्डिया को कच्चे माल प्रभाग की सतना खानों के पिछले कई महीनों से बन्द करने के क्या कारण हैं; और

(ख) क्या यह सच है कि हाल में ही उक्त खानों का कई करोड़ रुपये की लागत से आधुनिकीकरण किया गया है?

इस्पात तथा खान मंत्रालय में राज्य मंत्री (श्री रमेश बैस): (क) आई एल क्यू सतना में चूने पत्थर की अच्छी क्वालिटी न होने के कारण राउरकेला इस्पात संयंत्र द्वारा वर्ष 1996-97, 1997-98 और 1998-99 (दिसम्बर, 98 तक) क्रमशः 1.63 लाख टन, 0.68 लाख टन और 0.30 लाख टन चूना पत्थर उठाया और इस प्रकार इसमें लगातार कमी आती गई। उपरोक्त अवधि के दौरान इस खान का कुल प्रेषण भी 3.29 लाख टन से कम होकर 2.00 लाख टन और 1.12 लाख टन हुआ। तथापि, किसी कर्मचारी की छंटनी नहीं की गई। हालांकि कुछ कर्मचारियों ने स्वैच्छिक सेवा निवृत्ति ली है।

(ख) 6.35 करोड़ रुपए की लागत पर राउरकेला इस्पात संयंत्र के आधुनिकीकरण के अन्तर्गत 1995 में एक साइजिंग संयंत्र चालू किया गया था और 1.48 करोड़ रुपए की लागत से रेलवे साइडिंग का संशोधन भी किया गया था।

Defective Rails supplied by SAIL

746. SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Ministry of Railways complained that the rails supplied by the SAIL were defective and caused accidents; and

(b) if so, the action taken for supply of defected rails to Railways?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI RAMESH BAIS): (a) Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) has not received any complaint from Railways.

(b) Does not arise in view of (a) above.

Crisis in Steel Sector

747. SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether the steel companies in India are facing the crisis of market and production;

(b) if so, the steps takes to overcome the crisis;

(c) whether it includes any financial package, if so, the details thereof; and

(d) whether the export of steel increased and the details of steel export?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI RAMESH BAIS): (a) Steel Companies in India are facing problems in marketing their products for the last 2 years mainly due to the following factors:

(i) Sluggish demand in steel consuming sectors.

(ii) Overall economic slow down in the country.

(iii) Cost escalations in input materials for steel industry.

(iv) Dumping of finished steel from CIS and other countries.

(v) Adverse condition in export market for steel.

(vi) Decrease in domestic and international prices for steel.

(b) and (c) The Government and steel producers have taken several steps to overcome the difficulties in marketing. These include:—

Orienting product-mix of suit the market requirements and adjusting production in tune with change in the market demand.

Developing and nourishing long term customers relationship by entering into MOUs/supply arrangement with the customers.

A 'Steel Exporters Forum' has been set up to help steel exporters to overcome bottlenecks in exports.

To boost the demand and consumption of steel, the Development Commissioner for Iron and Steel (DCI&S) has launched a National campaign for increasing the demand for steel, especially in non-traditional sectors, such as rural and agro based industrial sector.